



January 31, 2008

Dear Colleague,

Recent U.S. surveillance reports indicate that influenza activity is on the rise. To reduce the substantial burden of influenza on the U.S., CDC recommends a three-pronged approach: increasing the number of people vaccinated against influenza, appropriate use of influenza antiviral agents, and promoting respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

1.) **First is the use of influenza seasonal vaccine.** Vaccination now can still provide protection against influenza this season since different influenza viruses can circulate as late as May. Please continue to offer vaccine to people recommended for vaccination, including health care workers, and anyone else who wants to decrease their risk of getting influenza. If your practice has administered all of its vaccine, you can purchase additional vaccine, or refer patients to local health departments or other vaccine providers.

2.) **An important second line of defense against influenza is the appropriate use of influenza antiviral medications.** These can be used to treat or prevent influenza virus infection. Treatment should begin within 48 hours of symptom onset, and can reduce symptoms and illness duration. There are two influenza antiviral agents that should be used in the U.S.: oseltamivir and zanamivir. Oseltamivir is approved for treatment and prevention of influenza in persons 1 year and older. Zanamivir is approved for treatment of persons 7 years and older and for prevention in persons 5 years and older.

3.) **Use respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette measures to prevent the spread of influenza.** These everyday preventive actions include frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick to keep from spreading illness.

Information and materials on these measures, including downloadable flyers and audio announcements, as well as information on how to locate available influenza vaccine for purchase, are available at www.cdc.gov/flu. We encourage you to visit our website and ask that you circulate this information widely. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to public health.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Cox
Director Influenza Division

and

Dr. Anne Schuchat
Director National Center for
Immunization and Respiratory Diseases